DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 173 833 CS 204 986

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TITLE Women in Organizational Communications: A 1979 Profile.
PUB DATE Aug 79
NOTE 28p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Association for Education in Journalism (62nd, Houston, Texas, August 5-8, 1979)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Business Communication; Career Opportunities; Comparative Analysis; Employment Patterns; Employment Trends; *Equal Opportunities (Jobs); Females; *Job Satisfaction; *Occupational Information; Occupational Surveys; *Organizational Communication; Public Relations; *Sex Discrimination; *Working Women

ABSTRACT

To provide a definitive and updated view of the woman communicator, specifically in the fields of organizational communication, business communication, and public relations, an analysis was made of data from the 1979 International Association of Business Communicators (IABC) survey. Data for that survey were obtained from the responses of some 2,800 IABC members to an eight-page questionnaire that elicited information about their educational and career preparation, their business organizations, their responsibilities, and job satisfaction. The results revealed that women are working for small organizations, which pay less, and in which there is less opportunity for advancement. On the whole, women earn 30% less than men, and the gap is increasing. In addition, women with equal qualifications, in equal positions, are paid less than men. On a more optimistic note, the findings also showed that younger women are better off relative to their male counterparts; and that generally, women are more actively seeking to improve themselves professionally than are men. (Author/FL)

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WOMEN IN ORGANIZATIONAL COMMUNICATIONS: A 1979 PROFILE

by

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Presented to the Status of Women Committee Research Seminar,
Association for Education in Journalism, Houston, Texas, August, 1979

CS204 986

Partly due to the advent of the womens liberation movement, and also in an attempt to maintain family income levels in days of inflation, women have been entering the workforce in droves over the last 15 years or so.

The advent of working women has been called by one economics expert "the single most outstanding phenomenon of our century."[1] Women make up 42 per cent of the nation's work force today.[2]

A decade down the road from the 'radical' sixties, and four years after international womens' year, how far have we come? Are women and men equal in the labor force, are they approaching equality, or is the gap increasing rather than diminishing?

In the overall labor force, of course, there is without question unequal status. As pointed out in another paper in this session, nearly 80 per cent of women work in clerical, sales, service, factory or plant jobs.

This paper will examine in detail comparative female and male status for a single profession, - corporate communicators or public relations officers - in an attempt to indicate just how far we have or have not come.

In the last eight to ten years, the number of women in various areas of the communications industry has been increasing steadily. In the newspaper industry, women constitute one-fourth of all newspaper professionals (business and editorial) and 11 per cent of working journalists. The ratio declines on the managerial level which consists of only 10 per cent women.[3]

In broadcasting, women hold more than one quarter (28 per cent) of the jobs.[4] On the managerial level, broadcasting appears to do better than newspapers; one-fourth of the managerial positions are held by women.[5]

In the field of public relations and publicity, approximately 38 per cent of the practitioners are women.[6]

While the gap between the number of men and women in various communication fields appears to be narrowing, a disparity still remains. In addition, for many communicators, their status and responsibilities within their organizations are truer indicators of today's "woman's place" than their mere representation on communications staffs.

The International Association of Business Communicators (IABC) conducts a survey of its membership every other year and data from its 1979 survey provided the basis for a closer look at the female organizational communicator in terms of her status within her organization, her responsibilities, her job satisfaction, and her activities for professional growth.

Previous studies on women in the field of organizational communications are scant. A 1974 survey by PR Reporter, a public relations trade journal, indicated that the typical female corporate public relations executive has a bachelor's degree, is 43 years old, has worked in the field of public relations for 12 years, earns an annual salary of $16,000, and either heads, or is second in command in, a department of seven people, four professionals and three clerical employees. Her male counterpart is slightly younger (42), has worked slightly longer in the field (13 years), and has an average annual salary of $21,000.[7]

A second survey in 1975 showed some change: women on average were one year younger than in the previous survey, had one year less experience, and earned a salary a thousand dollars higher.[8]

In 1977 when the International Association of Business Communicators conducted its second biennial survey of its members, results

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This study was funded in part by the International Association of Business Communicators.

showed that the percentage of women in IABC had climbed above 50 per cent -- to 50.8 per cent -- for the first time in the organization's history, and had increased 4.8 per cent since the 1975 survey. Data from the 1977 study indicate that the average female organizational communicator affiliated with IABC was:

--under 30 (51.3 per cent) while only 27.1 per cent of male members were under 30 years of age.

--married (53.1 per cent), but not as likely to be married as her male counterpart (80 per cent).

--had less than five years' experience (54.8 per cent) while only 30.7 per cent of the male members had less than five years in the field.

--had been with her current organization for less than five years (65.9 per cent), a significantly higher percentage than for men (50.3 per cent).

--had the title of editor (29.7 per cent), manager/director (23.0 per cent), or supervisor (5.3 per cent).

--spent most of her time on the job using communication skills (64.6 per cent) as opposed to managing or administrating (20.4 percent) or a combination of the two (5.4 per cent).

--were more likely not to hold at least bachelor's degrees (18 per cent) than her male counterpart (10 per cent) and may have come to her current position from a secretarial position (13 per cent). The woman communicator also was less likely to have college degrees beyond the bachelor's than males; only 11 per cent had advanced degrees compared with 20 per cent of the men.

--was more likely to be skeptical about her opportunities for professional advancement within her organization than males; only 26.5 per cent of the women said they have promotional opportunities equal to men, while 40 per cent of the men respondents saw promotional opportunities for men and women as equal[9].

In 1977, the average salary for female IABC members was $14,740, compared with $20,118 for men. Women's salaries showed greater increases than men's between 1975 and 1977, however, with women receiving average salary increases of 16 per cent while increases for men averaged 11 per cent. The average salary of women with one year or less of experience was $11,314, compared with $15,833 for men with similar experience, and women with 20 or more years' experience earned $21,172 compared with $25,902 for men.[10]

In the area of job satisfaction and advancement, the survey showed that two-thirds of the women members were satisfied with their present position, and 81 per cent were satisfied with their job security. Slightly more than half (51 per cent) said their organization hires and promotes women as readily as men in starting and intermediate jobs, but only 26 per cent thought women were promoted as readily as men to management positions. Women's attitudes differed little from the levels of satisfaction expressed by their male counterparts.[12]

In an attempt to provide a more definitive and updated view of the woman communicator, specifically the women in organizational and business communications and public relations, the authors analyzed data from the 1979 International Association of Business Communicators survey. A summary of that analysis follows.

Method

The survey was conducted by the IABC in January, 1979 assisted by the

Communications Research Center, Syracuse University. Questionnaires were sent out to the entire membership of 5000, and 2750 were returned, for a 55 per cent return rate.[13] 54.4 per cent were females, and 45.6 per cent males.

The questionnaire was eight pages long and covered a wide variety of areas including educational and career preparation, nature of organization, responsibilities, professional growth and job satisfaction.

Results

Profile of the Female Organizational Communicator. The mean age for the women in the sample was 33 years. Close to one-fifth had less than a college degree, almost two-thirds (64.5 per cent) had bachelors degrees, 15.2 per cent had masters degrees, and eight women had doctorates. This compares unfavorably with males, who were less likely to be on the lower end of the educational scale, and more likely to be on the upper end. (Table 1).

More women had English (27 per cent) or Journalism News (23 per cent) undergraduate backgrounds than any other area, as did men. The rest had degrees in fields such as public relations, business, social science, or advertising. Among those who had masters degrees, 38 per cent of the women and 44 per cent of the men majored in Journalism, with the rest in such areas as English or Business.

Prior to their current jobs, 24 per cent of the women were students, versus 15 per cent of the men. Fourteen per cent of the women had newspaper backgrounds, compared to 31 per cent of the men. The rest had previous occupations in areas ranging from teaching to freelancing, but

nine per cent of the females were secretaries or clerks, compared to 0.5 per cent of the males.

A little over four-fifths of the women, and slightly more men, said organizational communication was not their career choice while in school. Women spent fewer years with their organization than did men, with the mean for women about five years, compared to seven and a half for men. Similarly, women have spent less time in the field of organizational communications as a whole. Females averaged just over five years, compared to almost nine years for men.

There were more women than men working for small organizations, all the way up to 5000 employees, and more males in every category over 5000. (Table 2). Almost half of the women versus 43 per cent of the men, were working for medium-sized publications with an audience of from 1000 to 10,000. There were twice as many women as men in small publications with an audience of less than 1000 -- 14.2 per cent compared to 6.3 per cent -- while there were nine per cent more men working for large publications with an audience of more than 10,000.

Just over half of the women were working for corporations (52 per cent), compared to 59 per cent of the men. There were more women than men working for educational, financial and health care institutions. However, twice as many females as males reported being self-employed; 21 females (1.4 per cent) versus nine males (0.7 per cent).

Responsibilities and Job Satisfaction. Respondents indicated the title that most accurately describes their position. The results by sex are presented in Table 3. Clearly, there were more male vice presidents,

directors, managers and supervisors; on the other end, there were more female 'specialists', editors, assistants, and writers.

There was no difference between men and women communicators in whom they reported to. About one third of men as well as women said they reported to either the chief executive or a vice president. Males were more likely to say they have direct access to the top of their organization (84 per cent versus 78 per cent).

Men and women are compared on three salary categories in Table 4: present salary range, salary increase last year, and salary increase over the last three years. The differences between males and females in all three categories were significant. The salary distribution shows that more women than men can be found in the lower salary ranges. However, the salary increases in the last year and over the last three years favored the women, i.e., women were getting significantly greater increases in salary over the last three years than were men, a relationship that holds up when controlling for the larger number of women who were previously students.

The salary differences remained even when position was controlled for, as Table 5 illustrates. With the exception of the position of Writer, the differences between men and women's salaries for the same job titles were highly significant.

Overall, using mean salaries for comparison purposes (although median figures showed highly similar trends), females averaged $17,362 annually, compared to $24,475 for males, or a 30 per cent difference. Although, as reported above, females reported higher salary increases in both the last year and the previous three years, comparing the obtained 1977 averages with 1979,

females increased by about 16 per cent, compared to 21 per cent for males.

In the past, it has been suggested that there are differences between men and women communicators which might explain salary discrepancies. Women are younger, for example, with 63 per cent of females 32 and under, compared to 37 per cent of males. Females are also slightly less likely to be as highly educated (there is by the way some evidence that this is changing. Looking only at respondents under 33 years old, there are more women with masters degrees than there are men).

Women also tend to have been in organizational communication and with their particular company for less time, and are less likely to hold the higher positions. They are more likely to work for educational, hospital, and financial institutions, which are smaller and pay less.

As it happens, these differences do not explain the discrepancy in salaries. Women in the same positions, and with the same apparent qualifications as men, are being paid less.

Series of multiple regressions were run to determine the best predictor of salary. The independent variables entered into the regressions were: size of organization, years in organizational communication, years with current organization, position, age, sex, education, and country (Canada/U.S.). At the same time, previous occupation was controlled, using the two largest groups, those who worked for newspapers and those who were students, prior to entering organizational communication. Because of the differences between types of organizations, the largest group was selected, i.e. those who worked for corporations.

As can be seen in Table 6, independent of other considerations,

sex is an extremely important, if not the most important predictor of communicators' salaries. Just entering the independent variables listed above into the equation, sex is by far the best overall predictor of salary, followed by organization size and position of the communicator in the company. When we only look at employees of corporations whose previous occupation was in newspapers, sex closely follows years in organizational communication as predictor of salary, followed by organization size and position (Table 6).

It is only when we look at those working for a corporation, who were previously students, that sex slips to the fifth best predictor of salary, following years in organizational communication, organization size, position, and age. Country, education, and years with current organization are consistently in the lowest ranks of the predictors.

The fact that sex slips in importance for those who were previously students suggests an improvement among the young. Are things 'getting better'? Of course, older communicators may be as likely as younger ones to have gone directly from school into organizational communication. But comparing the mean ages of those whose previous occupation was a student with all other previous occupations together, indicates that they are in fact significantly younger (32.6 years versus 36.9 years). Thus, for younger people, we should find that sex is not as important in determining salary as it is for older people. Looking only at those respondents under 30 years old (N=785), as an overall predictor, sex drops from first place to fifth, behind years in organizational communication, organization size, age, and position in the organization.

Things are getting better. However, sex is still more important than other variables such as education and years with one's current organization. (Table 7).

Job satisfaction was evaluated in terms of how women perceived opportunities for advancement in their organizations and the likelihood of remaining or leaving. Table 8 shows how respondents perceived advancement opportunities. The men saw slightly better advancement opportunities in their organizations than did the women. This difference did not change when age was controlled for. More women than men perceived opportunities to be below average regardless of age. The results remained the same when education was controlled. Among those women who thought advancement possibilities were below average or poor, almost half cited poor turnover as the primary explanation.

Regarding their employment situation and possibilities for remaining or leaving, Table 9 shows that a third of the women would be receptive to other offers but a third also indicated they were staying with their organizations. Seeking advancement and promotion was cited by two-thirds of the women as the major reason they would leave their present organizations.

Professional Growth. Another question we explored was what women were doing for professional growth in comparison to men. Table 10 summarizes activities for professional growth. The results show that overall, women appear to be more active than men in improving themselves professionally.

They are attending more seminars, workshops etc., have an equal

number of memberships in professional organizations, are completing more pertinent college level courses, and are more likely to be pursuing a degree (Table 10).

Discussion

The following is a summary of our results:

1. The typical female organizational communicator is 33 years old, and has a bachelor's degree in English.

2. She has been with her organization 5 years and has been in the field of organizational communications about the same length of time. She was a student prior to entering the field. As a student, organizational communications was not her career choice.

3. She is affiliated with a small corporation of less than 1,000 employees and is an editor of a medium-sized publication with an audience size of 10,000 or less.

4. She is earning a salary of about $17,000 while her male counterpart is earning about $24,000. Her salary increases over the last three years have been less than her male colleague's, although she reports her increases as larger than the actual figures show.

5. She is farther away in rank from the top in her organization than her male counterpart and is also more likely to report a problem with access to superiors.

6. She is actively seeking to improve herself professionally by attending professional seminars, joining other professional organizations, and taking field-related coursework.

What do the data as a whole suggest? Base Our findings show cause for more pessimism than optimism.

There is still a definite disparity between male and female organizational communicators in terms of the positions they occupy, the amount of authority they have, and their salaries.

The disparity can only be partially accounted for by a slight difference in educational backgrounds, size and type of organization, and amount of experience. There were slightly more men than women who had bachelor's and advanced degrees. Men also generally had more experience than women in the field of organizational communications. However, when these and other differences were equalized, women were still behind men in their salaries.

These differences most likely account for the women's dissatisfaction with their jobs. They view advancement opportunities pessimistically, are receptive to offers of similar positions or promotions outside of their present companies, and more likely than not are probably aware of some salary discrimination.

Perhaps another source of dissatisfaction is the fact that while in college, organizational communication was not a career choice for women. While this was also true for men, perhaps men have not expressed dissatisfaction to the same degree as women because once on the job, they have been able to advance without too much difficulty. Women in fact cite the slow turnover in their companies as the most important reason they would consider leaving. Again, this slow turnover may be a function of the smaller companies that women tend to be working for.

The positive side to all this is that women, more than men, are making efforts to improve themselves professionally. Thus, women are not only expressing discontent; they are apparently doing something about it to

improve their chances of getting ahead, either in their companies or elsewhere. While not one of the more important factors for predicting advancement, education does not hurt.

Where might we go from here? The biennial survey of its membership by the International Association of Business Communicators provides a good data base for keeping track of women in the profession and this effort to chart the progress of women should be continued.

A similar effort on a continuing basis on other mass media professionals such as the studies conducted by the Bureau of Media Research at Indiana University on women in the newspaper industry might also provide fruitful comparisons within the field of communications.[14]

Table 1

Education By Sex

Education	Female	Male
High School or less	47 3.2%	23 1.9%
Some College	244 16.6%	138 11.2%
Bachelors	949 64.5%	804 65.1%
Masters	224 15.2%	254 20.6%
Ph.D	8 0.5%	16 1.3%
Total	1472 100 %	1235 100 %

$X^2 = 33.7$ Gamma = .202 p = .0000

Table 2

Size of Organization, By Sex

Organization Size	Sex	
	Female	Male
Less than 500	9.1	5.8
500-999	12.1	7.7
1000-2999	25.0	24.5
3000-4999	11.2	10.1
5000-7499	8.1	9.0
7500-9999	3.6	4.1
10,000-14,999	6.1	7.0
15,000-19,999	3.5	4.7
20,000-39,999	7.9	9.7
40,000-99,999	3.9	6.6
100,000 +	1.7	3.8
	100%	100%
N	1449	1222

X^2= 49.5 Gamma = .157 p= .0000

Table 3

TITLES OF ORGANIZATIONAL COMMUNICATORS, BY SEX

	Females		Males	
	N	%	N	%
Vice President	14	1.0	34	2.8
Director	212	14.8	233	19.2
Manager	226	15.8	361	29.8
Supervisor	89	6.2	99	8.2
Specialist	188	13.2	108	8.9
Editor	476	33.3	247	20.4
Assistant	66	4.6	32	2.6
Writer	47	3.3	24	2.0
Other	111	7.8	73	6.0
Total	1429	100%	1211	100%

$X^2 = 145.1$, Gamma = .26, p = .000

Table 4

SALARIES AND SALARY INCREASES, BY SEX

A. Salaries:

	Under $12,500		12,500-17,499		17,500-24,999		25,000-34,999		35,000-Up		Total	
Female	90	19.4	224	39.3	161	32.9	27	7.4	9	1.0	1465	100%
Male	25	4.1	89	16.6	190	39.5	119	28.8	44	10.9	1225	100%

X^2 = 614.9, Gamma = .61, p= .000

B. Mean Salary Increase Last Year (In Per Cent):

	N	$\bar{X}$
Female	1450	13.13
Male	1222	10.92

t = 3.11 p = .002 (two tail)

C. Mean Salary Increase Last Three Years (In Per Cent)

	N	$\bar{X}$
Female	1107	40.73
Male	1059	34.40

t = 3.85 p = .000

Table 5

SALARY AND SEX

CONTROLLING FOR POSITION

Position	Female	N	Male	N	
Overall	$17,362	1465	$24,475	1225	*
Vice President	24,018	14	33,712	33	*
Director	19,057	212	26,331	232	*
Manager	20,201	224	27,192	357	*
Supervisor	18,834	89	23,624	99	*
Specialist	16,063	187	20,451	108	*
Editor	15,766	470	20,992	247	*
Assistant	13,996	66	16,711	32	*
Writer	17,636	46	18,438	24	

* $P < .001$, t-test

1 Figures represent estimated means, using categorical data (E. W. Minium, Statistical Reasoning in Psychology & Education, John Wiley and Sons, N. Y. 1970 P.58)

Table 6

SALARY PREDICTION

Variable	Overall		Newspaper[1]/Corporation[2]		Student[1]/Corporation[2]	
	Standardized Beta Coefficient	F-Ratio[3]	Standardized Beta Coefficient	F-Ratio	Standardized Beta Coefficient	F-Ratio
Sex	.278	307.0	.315	63.6	.095	4.2
Size of Organization	.217	199.1	.247	38.6	.215	25.7
Position	.217	197.2	.242	38.6	.210	22.3
Years in Org. Communication	.209	100.8	.337	30.1	.442	13.8
Age	.195	81.5	.003	0.0*	.188	2.9
Country(Canada/US)	.101	44.2	.016	0.2*	.045	1.1*
Education	.078	24.4	-.005	0.0*	.081	3.6
Years w/Organization	.024	1.4*	.039	0.5*	-.067	1.0*
N	2,324		322		250	
r^2	.49		.57		.58	

[1]Previous Occupation

[2]Type of Organization

[3] In every case, the partial F-ratio agreed with b/standard error of b, another significance test

* p .01

Table 7
SALARY PREDICTION
(Respondents Under 30)

Variable	Standardized Beta Coefficient	F-Ratio[1]
Years in Organization Communication	.263	65.4
Organization Size	.234	67.6
Age	.215	45.5
Position	.166	32.5
Sex	.160	31.4
Country	.134	21.5
Education	.123	17.3
Years with Current Organization	.042	1.9*

N = 785

r^2 = .394

* p .01

1 In all cases, the partial F-ratio agreed with b/standard error of b, another significance test

Table 8

OPPORTUNITIES FOR ADVANCEMENT, BY SEX

Question: "How would you describe your possibilities for advancement in your organization?"

	Females		Males	
	N	%	N	%
Outstanding	115	8.2	95	8.1
Above Average	375	26.7	332	28.2
Average	382	27.2	369	31.3
Below Average	284	20.3	189	16.0
Poor	246	17.5	194	16.5
Total	1402	100.0	1179	100.0

$\chi^2 = 10.8$ $p = .03$
Gamma = .046

Table 9

EMPLOYMENT SITUATION, BY SEX

Question: "Please check the sentence(s) that most accurately describe(s) your employment situation:"

	Female		Male	
	N	%	N	%
Seeking similar position/ promotion with another organization	158	11.1	105	8.9
Would be receptive to offer for similar position/promotion	453	31.9	403	34.2
I am interested in staying for time being	488	34.3	379	32.1
Will most likely be working for present organization in next 3 years	189	13.3	227	19.2
Will most likely be working for another organization in next 3 years	109	7.7	51	4.3
Other	25	1.8	15	1.3
Total	1422	100.0	1180	100.0

Table 10

ACTIVITIES FOR PROFESSIONAL GROWTH, BY SEX

A. Attendance of Seminars

Question: "How many professional seminars, workshops and conferences have you attended during the past year?"

	Female		Male	
	N	%	N	%
None	244	16.9	303	24.9
1	350	24.2	297	24.4
2	381	26.4	284	23.4
3+	470	32.5	332	27.3
Total	1445	100.0	1216	100.0

χ^2 = 29.1 Gamma = .14 $p < .0000$

B. Memberships in Professional Organizations

Question: "To what other professional organizations do you belong?" (Results were tabulated by number and type of organizations mentioned)

	Female		Male	
	N	%	N	%
None	306	27.8	246	26.9
1	439	39.9	386	42.2
2+	355	32.3	283	30.9
Total	1100	100.0	915	100.0

χ^2 = 1.1 Gamma = .005 p = .58

Table 10 (contd)

C. Courses Completed

Question: "During the past year, have you completed any college or university level courses directly related to your present position or promotion prospects?"

	Female		Male	
	N	%	N	%
Yes	539	37.4	264	21.9
No	903	62.6	944	78.1
Total	1442	100.0	1208	100.0

$X^2 = 74.3$ Gamma = .36 p = .0000

D. Pursuit of Degree

Question: "Are you now actively pursuing a degree?"

	Female		Male	
	N	%	N	%
No	1134	81.2	1049	88.0
Bachelors	100	7.2	41	3.4
Masters	126	9.0	85	7.1
Doctorate	7	0.5	9	0.8
Other	30	2.1	8	0.7
Total	1397	100.0	1192	100.0

$X^2 = 32.93$ Gamma = -.24 p = .0000

Footnotes

1. Eli Ginzburg, economics professor and Chairman, National Commission for Manpower Policy, was describing major changes in all areas of life including the family, the economy, the revival of urban areas, etc., as a result of women's entry into the work force in greater numbers. Werner, op. cit., p. 34.

2. Laurie Werner, "Where are Working Women Now?" Working Woman, December, 1978, p. 32, See also S. Cutlip and A. Center, Effective Public Relations (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1978, p.333

3. See Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, EEO Report -- 1975: Job Patterns for Minorities and Women in Private Industry, Vol. 1 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1977), p. 32 See also Edward G. Weston, "Social Characteristics and Recruitment of American Mass Media Directors," Journalism Quarterly, 55, Spring, 1978, pp. 62-67; John Johnstone, E.J. Slawski and W. Bowman, The Newspeople: A sociological Protrait of American Journalists and Their Work (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1976); D. Weaver, C.L. Ogan, C.J. Brown, and M.I. Benedict, "Women in Newspaper Management: A Status Report," (Bloomington: School of Journalism, Indiana University, 1977).

4. United Church of Christ, Office of Communications Report,1978; See also Vernon A. Stone, "Surveys Show Younger Women Becoming News Directors," RTNDA Communicator, October, 1976; U. S. Commission on Civil Rights, Window Dressing on the Set:January, 1979, pp. 33-43.

5. Ibid.

6. U. S. Department of Commerce, Census of Population, Occupational Characteristics: 1975.

7. PR Reporter,"Subscriber Survey," 1974.

8. PR Reporter, "Subscriber Survey," 1975.

9. IABC, Profile '77: A Survey of Business Communication and Business Communicators, (Syracuse: Syracuse University, 1978).

10. Ibid.

11. Ibid., p. 17.

12. Ibid., pp. 16-17

13. A follow-up was used to boost the return rate but due to the use of a census rather than sample population, the cost of further attempts was prohibitive.

14. Weaver, et.al., op. cit.; Susan Holly, "Women in Weekly Newspaper Management," AEJ, Seattle, 1978; Chris Ogan, "On Their Way to the Top? Men and Women Middle-Level Newspaper Managers," Status of Women Committee Research Session, AEJ, Houston, 1979.